

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 3-4PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER
10 July 1985

Shultz gives Cambodia no promises

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Los Angeles Times

KHAO I DANG, Thailand — Secretary of State George P. Shultz, touring the embattled Cambodian-Thai border here yesterday, refused to respond to pleas from displaced Cambodians for direct U.S. military aid to oust Vietnamese occupation forces from their country.

"U.S.A. — No. 1" and "We want to go home," Cambodians chanted as Shultz toured a refugee-evacuation site at the Thai-Cambodian border. At the camp, called Site 7, about 50,000 Cambodians greeted him with a sea of placards and posters, many of them in English and many asking for U.S. weapons.

One banner read: "We have manpower. We need arms and education. U.S. aid, please help us turn Vietnamese killing fields into Cambodian farming fields. We want to go home. God bless America."

Many of these refugees slip back across the border, through rice paddies and over hazy low hills just a few miles away, to fight the Vietnamese.

"Your visit is a momentous occasion in the history of the resistance," Site 7's administrative head, Thou Thon, said in welcoming Shultz. "You give us hope to carry on our battle against the cruel Vietnamese invaders. Your visit, we hope, marks America's commitment to the plight of our people."

Vietnam invaded Cambodia late in 1978 and soon replaced the communist Khmer Rouge regime there with a pro-Vietnamese communist administration. A coalition of three resistance groups, including the Khmer Rouge, has fought the Vietnamese and their pro-Hanoi regime in Cambodia since then.

Shultz's visit may have raised expectations higher than planned, and he refused to fulfill them by endorsing direct military aid for the rebels, including moves in Congress to provide \$5 million for that purpose.

The United States already provides \$28 million in non-military aid for

the refugees, \$8 million to Thai villages that have been affected by the fighting, and almost \$100 million a year in military aid to Thailand, whose own security is threatened by the Vietnamese strikes against the

rebel camps on the border.

"But the least of our response is tangible financial assistance," Shultz told the Cambodians. "There is also the human response and the spiritual response to your problem which is very deeply and widely held in our country."

At a news conference later in Bangkok, he similarly refused to endorse direct military aid. He also refused to comment on reports published by The Washington Post earlier this week that the Central Intelligence Agency provides about \$5 million a year to the non-Communist Cambodian rebels through Thai channels.

Shultz seemed nonetheless moved by the plight and spirit of the Cambodians and the Thais along the course of his four-hour helicopter and car trip yesterday.

"You take into your gut what you knew in the head about the conditions here, the outlook, the difficulties and the human tragedies involved," he said, coming away with "a greater depth of realization and understanding."

All these people are part of the

human flood of 230,000 who fled Cambodia between January and March in the face of Vietnamese attacks on refugee camps that were then inside the Cambodian border, and of the more than 500,000 refugees who have fled Cambodia in the last 10 years.

In another development yesterday, foreign ministers from Southeast Asia's six non-communist nations ended their annual meeting in Malaysia by accusing Vietnam of forcing civilians in Cambodia to work in war zones.

The foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

(ASEAN) vowed to seek a peaceful solution to Vietnam's six-year occupation of Cambodia.

But the ministers — from Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Brunei, Thailand and the Philippines — charged that Vietnam and the government it installed in Cambodia have forced thousands of civilians to work in areas where three groups of rebels are battling Vietnam's occupation army.

The Associated Press also contributed to this article.